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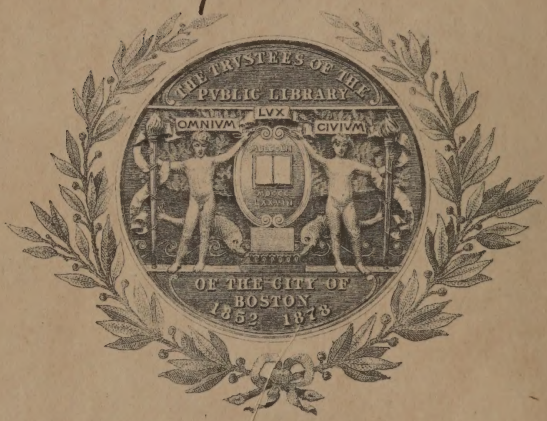
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A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

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REV. JOHN CODMAN,

TO THE

PASTORAL CARE

OF THE

SECOND CHURCH OF CHRIST IN DORCHESTER,

DEC. 7, 1808.

BY WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN FEDERAL STREET, BOSTON.

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SERMON.

II. TIMOTHY, iv. 2.

BE INSTANT IN SEASON, OUT OF SEASON.

We are this day assembled to witness a solemnity peculiarly interesting to the friends of religion. This day we are to behold a new labourer introduced into the vineyard of God. This day are to be laid on a young man the vows and obligations of the christian ministry, the care of many immortal souls. This day a relation is to be formed, by which the everlasting interests of numbers will be deeply affected.

On this occasion, I have thought that it would be useful to dwell on the importance of a zealous and affectionate performance of ministerial duties. On this subject I could wish to hear rather than to speak. I feel that the place which belongs to me, is not that of a confident teacher, but of a humble, self-accusing learner. When I look round on my fathers and brethren in the ministry, whose years and experience and improvements in piety peculiarly fit them for this

theme, I feel no faint desire to resign to them the office I am expected to perform. But my feelings and wishes have been overruled; and now that I must speak, I wish to suggest something, which will tend to quicken my own heart; which will stir up the minds of my brethren; and which will impress this numerous assembly with the duties and objects, the tremendous responsibility, and the infinitely solemn consequences of the sacred ministry.

It is the exhortation of Paul to Timothy, "Be instant in season, out of season," i. e. 'Be urgent, engaged, in earnest, not only at stated seasons of instruction, not only when thine own ease and convenience may permit, but at every season when thou canst hope that truth may be imparted, or serious impressions be produced.' These words furnish us with this practical doctrine, that a minister of Jesus Christ should be distinguished by zeal, earnestness and affection in the discharge of his sacred office. In the present discourse, I propose to offer a few remarks on the duty enjoined in the text, and then to present considerations suited to enforce it on our consciences and hearts.

First, to be instant in season and out of season, is to be cordially devoted to the great object of the christian ministry. It is to exert on this object the strength of our affections, to make it the centre of our thoughts, and the great end of our labours. In this zeal and earnestness it is implied, that our work is

our happiness ; that we do not make our ministry a means to some further, selfish end ; that we do not enter on it from love of ease, or distinction, or gain ; but that it is itself our choice, and that we cling to it with an affection which overpowers all private considerations. It is implied, that we oversee the flock of God not from constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but from a ready mind, that the love of Christ bears us away, and that from this love we desire to feed his sheep.

To be instant in season, and out of season, is to be carried by affection to habitual, continued efforts for human salvation. It is not to make a few convulsive efforts when our feelings are accidentally warmed, and then to settle down into supineness and sloth. It is not to confine ourselves to a cold, mechanical round of what we call our duties, and to feel that we have done enough when we have done what is claimed and expected. It is to glow with a desire of success, to stand watching opportunities of doing good to the souls of men. It is to think that we have done nothing, whilst multitudes within our reach are perishing in their sins. It is to think no labour difficult, no sacrifice great, by which men may be saved. It is to explore new means of usefulness ; to enquire what peculiar forms of christian exertion our peculiar conditions and relations may admit ; and then to follow with resolute purpose and strenuous effort the plans which approve themselves to our serious judgment. Perhaps, there is no profession, no occupation which

encourages so much musing, as the profession of a minister. It is very easy and very pleasing to mark out paths of usefulness, to set at work in our imaginations a variety of means, from which the happiest effects are to flow. But to *do* as well as to *will*, this is the toil. To be instant in season and out of season implies, that we carry deliberation into practice; that we convert possible into real good; that no discouragements have power to shake those purposes, which we deliberately approve; that we wait not to consult ease or opinion, when we have already consulted God and our own consciences; that we press forward in the path of duty, undismayed by the opposition, unabashed by the ridicule of the world.

This zeal and earnestness ought to pervade our whole ministerial duties.—We should carry it into our *private* studies and devotions. A minister can impart to his people only what he has himself received. His own understanding must be first enlightened, his own heart first kindled, before he can communicate a rational and fervent piety. Hence a minister should apply with zeal to the various means of personal improvement. He should never be contented with his present attainments, never imagine that he has learned all which God has revealed, never say that he has formed his system, and has nothing to do but to preach it. Divine truth is infinite and can never be exhausted. The wisest of us are but children: our views are very dim and narrow; and even where we discern the truth, how faint is its practical

impression. Every minister, I think, who studies the scriptures with a simple heart, must feel that there is much to be corrected in his views of religion. From the difficulty which he finds in making all scripture easily and naturally harmonize with his own sentiments, or with any other system, he must infer, that even where the truth is held in the greatest purity, it is still blended with not a little error. This conviction, united with a consideration of the influence which he necessarily exerts over the minds of others, should lead him to his Bible with almost trembling solicitude. He ought to bend on it the whole powers of his mind, that he may attain enlarged and consistent conception of the divine character and will. He ought, in his studies, habitually to exert a watchfulness over his mind, lest some unworthy feeling, some narrow interest, some prejudice of education, some attachment to a party secretly insinuate itself, and incline him to one view of religion, rather than another. He ought to unite fervency of prayer with earnestness and freedom of enquiry, and distrusting himself seek the better guidance of the Father of Lights and the Spirit of Truth.

But a minister must not only be earnest in his private studies; he must be urgent and alive in his *public* duties. From his retirement he should bring into the sanctuary a heart glowing with christian affections. His prayers should discover a mind familiar with God, accustomed to the mercy-seat, elevated by habitual devotion, and breathing without effort the

pure and humble desires of a christian. In preaching, his heart should disclose itself in his sentiments, manner and style. Whilst unfolding the divine perfections, he should let men see, that they are perfections he himself loves and adores. In enjoining a christian temper, he should urge it as one, who has felt its beauty and power. When describing the promises of the gospel, he should speak with the animation of a holy hope. Whilst directing men to the cross, he should speak as one, who has prostrated himself at its foot. This is pulpit eloquence. He should let men see that he has come, not to dazzle them with the studied ornaments of rhetoric, not to play before them the tricks of an orator, but to fix their solicitous attention on the concerns of eternity, to persuade them to be reconciled to God, and to incite them to universal obedience. Let me here mention that it is highly important, that his *manner* be earnest. By this I do not mean a noisy, tumultuous manner. I do not mean, that a minister must have lungs of iron and a voice of thunder—Noise and earnestness are very different things. I only mean, that the minister should deliver his message, as if he felt its infinite weight, as if his whole soul were interested in its success ; and this he may do without being a brawler. In the still, small voice, we may discern the language of the heart. I repeat it, this expression of the heart is the perfection of ministerial eloquence. Rules are very useful to teach us what to avoid. But when rules have done all that they can for us, they will leave us chilling preachers, unless we superadd that tenderness

and earnestness, which an engaged heart can alone breathe through our delivery.—May I be permitted to mention the want of this earnestness as a prevalent defect at the present day. My brethren, should not our sleeping hearers, and the faint effects of our ministry lead us to enquire, whether we present religious truth in the most impressive form. Is it asked, how this coldness of manner is to be remedied? Let us not, for this end, mimic feelings we do not possess. Let us rather, before we preach, possess our souls with the importance of the truth we are to deliver. Let us make our discourses truly our own, by catching first ourselves the impressions we wish to make on others. Whilst preaching, let the presence of the Divine Majesty frequently recur to us, that it may extinguish our fear of man, and excite an animating confidence in the blessing of God. Were these our habits, should we not be more interesting preachers?

But farther, the zeal of the minister of Christ should extend beyond the sanctuary. He should carry into his common walks and conversations a mind bent on his great end, and ever ready to seize an opportunity of impressing men with religion. He should particularly labour in his own life, in his own familiar intercourse, to exhibit a uniform and interesting example of the truth he preaches. He should not only be solicitous to preach, but still more to live christianity. That minister is not instant in season and out of season, who has learned to excite in him-

self some momentary feelings, and to employ words and tears of entreaty, whilst in the pulpit; but who comes into the world ready to sympathize with its evil feelings, and to comply like a slave with its tyrannical requisitions.

Such is christian zeal. I need not mention that this zeal cannot be maintained without great attention to the government of our desires and passions. The mind and heart can never act vigorously on religion, whilst fettered and benumbed by any sensual lust, by avarice or ambition. Would we attain the bold and persevering zeal enjoined by the apostle? We must keep under the body; we must partake with rigid temperance of animal pleasure; we must look with holy indifference on worldly wealth and honour; and thus preserve unwasted the energy of our souls, that we may consecrate it to the work which we have voluntarily assumed.

This genuine christian earnestness is too rarely seen. Ministers and private christians are indeed very often in earnest: but their zeal is not seldom an unhallowed, destructive fire, kindled at any altar rather than that of God. There are some, whose zeal is madness, who place religion in the fervors and extacies of a disordered mind and who shatter their own and others' understandings in a whirlwind of sound.— There are some whose zeal is partial: they spend it all on forms and opinions, which, though not unimportant, are not the essentials of christianity. They

compass sea and land, not to make followers of Christ, but converts to their sect. They overlook the heart, that they may rectify the head; and make christianity, not a vital, inward, efficient principle, expressed in increasing conformity to Jesus Christ, but a dry, cold, barren system of modes and speculations.—There are some who are earnest enough, but their earnestness is passionate and irritable. They cannot bear contradiction. They do not address serious argument to the erroneous, and affectionate persuasion to the sinful, but express their zeal in clamour, abuse, hard names, and all the varieties of persecution which their situation places within their reach.—There is also a zeal which is the base born progeny of pride and ambition. It is ever busy and active, for it loves to be seen and heard, and to acquire influence in the church. It is greedy of services which draw attention, and seeks to heighten itself by casting severe reflections on the lukewarmness of others. Remote from all these is true christian zeal. True zeal is enlightened and judicious; meek and gentle; sensible of its own infirmities, and therefore ready to bear long with others; not devoted to a party, but to the wide interests of christian piety; not anxious for elevation, but willing to be eclipsed, and thrown far behind by the more splendid and useful exertions of others for the common cause of christianity. So single, disinterested, and fervent is the zeal, which the gospel requires of its ministers.

I now proceed to suggest some considerations suited to excite and strengthen this holy earnestness,

this active fervent devotion to the service of God. And here I know not where to begin, or where to end. Wherever my mind directs itself, arguments throng and urge their claim to attention. Christian minister, there is nothing in life or death, in heaven or hell, which does not call thee to be earnest and engaged.

First, the importance of ministerial earnestness will be seen, if we consider what concern God has expressed, what infinite means he has employed for that great end, which the christian ministry is designed to advance. The salvation of man is the leading object of the providence of God. This his merciful voice promised to our guilty parents immediately after the fall. For this, the cumbrous fabric of the Mosaic dispensation was reared. For this, prophets were inspired, and were enabled successively to cast a clearer light on futurity. For this, the son of God himself left the abodes of glory, and expired a victim on the cross! For this, the harmony of creation was disturbed, and stupendous miracles were wrought to attest the gracious promises of God. For this end, a church has been erected, and its interests guarded amidst the convulsions of a sinful world. For this end, nations have been, and still are shaken. Yea in this end, all heaven is interested. Heaven is gladdened by the tidings that a sinner has repented. Angels are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation.

My friends, view these endless, these most costly means. Behold the church, the spiritual temple of

God, reared through ages with such toil, with such care; and shall we, to whom its interests are peculiarly committed, imbibe none of the earnestness which God has exhibited? Shall we slumber in a cause, which has called forth such exertion in heaven as well as on earth, and which God has espoused as peculiarly his own?

Secondly, another argument for ministerial earnestness may be drawn from the example of Jesus Christ, who condescended himself to sustain the office of a preacher of truth and righteousness. And how did he fulfil this sacred office? Was he sluggish, irresolute, and self indulgent? Behold him travelling through regions where he had no place to lay his head. Listen to his common conversations on the road, in the house, at the feast, and see what object was ever present to his heart. Hear now his solemn reproofs, now his animating exhortations, now his consoling promises, and can you help discerning the marks of a mind deeply interested in its end? Jesus is a glorious pattern of ministerial earnestness. He had every thing to discourage him. He saw little immediate fruit of his labour. He saw his divine truth kindling a malice, fierce and unquenchable as the fire of hell. He saw around him men, whose hands and garments were, to his prophetic eye, already stained with his blood. But did these things move him? The nearer he approached his cross, the more solemn, bold, urgent, and forcible was his preaching. He pressed his great object close to his heart in the hour of danger, and held it

fast in the agonies of death. Christian ministers, look at your Saviour, and catch his patient, firm, and persevering zeal.—Did I think that you needed other examples, I would direct you from the Divine Master to men like yourselves, to his apostles, the first ministers of his kingdom. I would show you these disinterested men, forsaking their homes, encountering dangers by sea and land, carrying their saving, holy truth, almost with the rapidity of lightning, through a dark, wretched world, and at length voluntarily sealing their testimony at the stake or cross by the last drop of their blood. Christian ministers! here are the men, whom you are called to succeed. This was the path, by which your elder brothers in the ministry ascended to glory. Hear them exhorting you with their last breath to exert every nerve in that cause, for which they thought it an honour and happiness to die.

Thirdly, it is a powerful argument for ministerial earnestness, that on this our success very much depends. When the preacher sleeps, the people will sleep under him. If he discover no sense of the importance of his work, his people will hardly be impressed with it. He has to treat of distant, unseen objects. Unless he feel them, and appear to feel them, his earthly sensual hearers will hardly be convinced of their reality. Men are slumbering and need to be awaked. Is it the voice of the sluggard, which will rouse them to exertion? Of all the frowns of Providence, perhaps none is more threatening than the settlement of a cold hearted, uninterested minister. His

coldness petrifies all within his influence. Men judge of religion by the character of its heralds. If in them, it is a torpid, inactive principle, beholders will think that nothing but a lifeless assent is necessary to make a christian. An earnest minister will not always be successful in proportion to his earnestness. But if he have the humble, affectionate zeal I have described, if his people see that with him religion is an ever present reality, if they hear him addressing them with solemnity and tenderness, with a heart trembling for their danger, and ready to leap with joy at their improvement, I think he cannot always speak in vain. Of all principles, sympathy is the most active. A warm heart diffuses itself on every side. Moral heat is as expansive as natural. It differs only in this, that we gain by imparting it.—But in addition to the power of sympathy, the earnest minister has reason to expect a peculiar blessing from that Being, who enjoins and approves his designs and labours. On the vineyard which he has so assiduously cultivated, he may expect the gentlest, the most reviving, the most fertilizing showers of heaven. Christian ministers, what an argument is this for earnestness! Can we bear the thought of seeing our people remaining year after year worldly and formal, and at length sinking into the grave indifferent to religion? Can we bear the thought of spending our lives and growing old, without seeing any fruit of our labours? Do we wish to carry this thought to the bed of death, that we have lived in vain? Is this the worst of evils? Let us then be earnest and alive in our sacred work.

Fourthly, as another most solemn incitement to earnestness, let a minister consider the dangerous circumstances of his people. To whom is he sent to preach ? To men, of upright hearts, disposed to receive and obey the truth which guides to heaven ? To men, before whom the future is arrayed in light, and who are surrounded only with objects friendly to peace and improvement ? Ah no ! He is called to guide a wandering flock through a thorny rugged wilderness, beset with snares and beasts of prey, and, on this side and on that, terminated by abrupt and hidden precipices. He is sent to a world of sinners, in whose hearts lurk idolatry, sensuality, pride, and every corruption. He is sent to many who are bound in fetters of iron, and are perishing with the most loathsome diseases. He is indeed sent with balm for their wounds, with light, and hope, and consolation. But there are those, and sometimes not a few, who turn away from the offered aid. Even among the decent and regular, he sees his most solemn instructions crowded out of the mind, and the most hopeful impressions worn away, by the cares and pleasures of the world. He sees immortal beings, committed to his care, advancing with rapid steps to the brink of an abyss, from which they are never to arise. And can he be unconcerned ? Can he read of that fire which is never quenched, of that worm which never dies, and yet see without emotion fellow beings, with whom he sustains the tenderest connexions, hastening forward to this indescribable ruin. My christian brethren ! when we look on the people of

our charge, can we hope that every soul is safe, that the sigh of acceptable penitence has ascended from every heart? Are none living without God? And is it not a thought unutterably affecting, that these are all trembling on the verge of the grave, that soon, very soon, one or another will be forever removed from the reach of our warning voice, to receive an irreversible sentence from the righteous Judge? Negligent minister, look forward to the tribunal of God. Behold a human being there condemned, whom thy neglect has helped to destroy. In that countenance of anguish and despair, which might have beamed with all the light and purity of heaven; in that voice of weeping and wailing, which might have sung the sweet and happy strains of angels, see and hear the ruin which thou hast made: and canst thou yet be slothful and unconcerned?

But, 5thly, be incited to earnestness by the amazing and unparalleled felicity, which a faithful ministry is suited to communicate! Surely you would call that man most hard-hearted, who should move sluggishly, when sent to carry a healing medicine to the dying, to stay the uplifted arm of the executioner, or to snatch from a precipice a sinking traveller. But the christian minister is enabled to render still more important services; and shall HE be sluggish and unmoved? It is the peculiar excellence and glory of the truth he preaches, that, where it is cordially received, it gives peace to the conscience, and purity to the heart. It carries comfort into the house of mourn-

ing, and contentment into the abodes of the poor; it sustains the trembling decrepitude of age; it puts the language of serenity and submission into the pale and parched lips of sickness, and kindles a ray of hope in the dim, closing eye of death. Nothing but religion can make men happy. It is the work of the minister to promote religion. By his earnest and affectionate labours, the insensible are made tender; the thoughtless are composed into reflection; the proud knee is bent before God; the selfish heart dilates with benevolence. Behold that man so mild, so heavenly. Once he was a child of Satan. By the truth which fell from the minister of Christ, he was awakened, he was humbled, he was converted. Behold him now exerting a kindly influence on all within the reach of his arm, or the sight of his example. See how gratefully he receives the blessings, how meekly he bows to the afflictions of Providence. See how peacefully he dies. But do the fruits of ministerial labours end in death? No. Death has only carried the christian to receive the rewards, for which a faithful ministry has helped to prepare him. Death has only refined that earthly corruptible body. Death has purged from that soul its last stain, and exalted it to the perfect love and unclouded vision of God. Death has introduced the saint to the friendly throngs of saints and angels in heaven, and made him the sharer of their purer praises and endless improvements in truth and goodness. My brethren, look forward to eternity! When the trophies of heroes, the monuments of earthly grandeur, shall have mouldered away, when

the empires of conquerors shall have fallen, when the last conflagration shall have reduced to one wide ruin the labours of ages, then the souls which ye have guided through an evil world, shall survive in purity and endless felicity. Shall we not then be roused to exertion ?

Lastly, let the minister of Christ be excited to an earnest and affectionate discharge of his duties, by the consideration that his own eternal interests are involved in it. A minister has a soul to save, as well as his people. Like them, he is spending life in the presence of his Judge. Like them, he has a work assigned, an account to render, a probation on which eternity depends. Soon his pastoral relation will be dissolved, his period of usefulness be closed, and he must meet the Chief Shepherd, the Head of the church, to answer for the trust assigned him. Of all men, a cold, negligent minister has the darkest prospects. It is the whole tendency of his life to form him to peculiar blindness and hardness of heart. By repeating often, with hypocritical formality, the tenderest expressions and the most animating motives, his conscience becomes peculiarly seared. The most alarming threatenings become too familiar to move him. With moral feelings thus depraved, that decency of life, to which his profession almost compels him, easily passes with him for true religion. He dies, as he lived, self-deceived. Need I describe to you his anguish on that day, which will prove him a false, heartless minister of Jesus Christ, which shall discover to him

many souls lost through his neglect, in which the searching eyes of Jesus shall be fixed on him with righteous indignation, in which he shall hear the voice of the Saviour saying to him, 'Behold the inestimable souls for which my blood was shed, which I committed to your care, but which your negligence has helped to destroy. Depart with them far from me into everlasting fire.' Oh scene of agony! Let us, my friends, hold it to our minds, till it shall have exerted its full power; and then let us turn for relief to a brighter prospect. Contemplate the character and rewards of the faithful minister of the gospel. The affectionate, pious labours, in which he is daily engaged, have a peculiarly ameliorating influence on his heart, by continually awakening the sentiments of kindness and devotion. The truths and impressions, which he so zealously communicates, are reflected back on his own soul, and he is himself most improved, whilst he labours to improve his fellow beings. With what joy will such a minister stand before the judgment seat of Christ. With what joy will he meet again his christian friends, the objects of his former solicitude, safe from every temptation in a happier world. Think ye, my hearers, that the overflowing gratitude of men whom he has guided to heaven; think ye, that the mild countenance of his Redeemer beaming on him with complacency; think ye, that the humble hope of having swelled the everlasting joys of heaven, will give no thrill to his pure heart? Behold his fidelity approved by his merciful Judge. Behold him entrusted with new talents and powers,

exalted to be the minister of divine benevolence in other worlds, perhaps united with the beings whom he instructed on earth, in accomplishing purposes of love too vast for the most expansive imagination to embrace. Glorified servant of God, our lifted eyes toil in vain to follow thee, in thy rapid and eternal progress towards divine perfection. God Almighty, God most merciful! grant to us thy servants, that, by our earnest faithful ministry, we may ensure that glory which eye hath not seen, nor heart conceived, but which thine infinite grace has prepared for the sincere and devoted preachers of thy holy word.

I have thus attempted to explain and enforce ministerial zeal. Leaving these remarks to every conscience and every heart, I now hasten to the usual addresses of this day.

My dear friend, you need not that I should tell you the feelings with which I now address you. Our past affectionate intercourse, and the domestic relations, which you sustain, give me no common interest in the solemnity of this day. How can I better express the friendship I bear you, than by solemnly intreating you to open your heart to the motives, truths, and duties, which have now been, and which will yet be brought to your view.

From the warmth of your feelings, from the affection with which you habitually attach yourself to the objects of your pursuit, I am encouraged to hope, that

your ministerial labours will be characterized and enlivened by earnestness and zeal. Watch, my brother, that your zeal may be a pure, serene, and heavenly flame, shedding a cheering heat, and a clear and steady light. Let it be blended with all the gentle, kind, and peaceful virtues of the gospel. Contend earnestly, but contend meekly, for truth and righteousness. Let your zeal be witnessed by the ever present God in your solitary studies and devotions, as well as by man in your public duties. Let your zeal shine forth in a life of humble piety, and of active, varied, and diffusive benevolence.

My brother, receive through me the ardent wishes of many hearts, that the union, which is now to be formed, may be lasting, useful, and happy. May you gain the affections of this people by a zeal for their salvation, by a pure example, and by an unaffected sympathy with their joys and sorrows. May their blessings descend on your head, through your whole life. May they cherish your memory, and pronounce your name with tenderness and gratitude, when you shall sleep in the dust. May you meet them again never to be separated in a happier world. My beloved brother, to the God of grace, to the merciful Redeemer, I affectionately commend you. Be thou faithful unto death and thou shalt receive a crown of unfading glory.

Brethren of this church and congregation, we rejoice with you in the pleasing prospect which this day

unfolds. We rejoice that God has sent to you a pastor to dispense to you his best gifts, the word and ordinances of his gospel. It is our hope and prayer, (and we can ask nothing better for you on this side heaven,) that under his ministry, you may be nourished with truth and guided to holiness, that you may feel the power and enjoy the consolations of our holy religion. You have this day been called to consider the importance of an earnest faithful ministry. Do your part, my brethren, that this blessing may be yours. Encourage your pastor by your prayers, by your devout attention, by your willingness to receive the whole counsel of God, by a candid construction of his words and actions, and by habitual offices of condescension and love. Remember, that to your affection he is now confiding much of the happiness of his life. On you, the colour of his future days very much depends. To you he is now consecrating the strength of his youth, the warmth of his heart, the best powers of his mind. Let him not go sorrowing through life, with the painful conviction that he is spending his strength for nought.

Consider, my friends, that this day, a solemn responsibility is to be imposed on you. You are now in the house and presence of God, to receive a pastor who, we trust, will faithfully admonish and instruct you. Do not forget that for every instruction you must render an account. Let not this prove a day, to which you will look back with anguish in a future world. Let not the privileges, you will henceforth

enjoy, rise at last in judgment against you. These are the warnings, which this solemn occasion compels me to suggest. But I must look forward to brighter prospects. I must hope that you and your pastor, bound in mutual love, and imparting mutual support, will walk together in the path of christian holiness to a blessed immortality.

To this numerous assembly I have only time to add: Let the subject of this day teach you your interest in an earnest, faithful ministry. Why is it, that we are called to be instant in season and out of season? It is because the ruin of sin, to which you are exposed, is unutterably tremendous; because the blessings of the gospel, to which you are invited, are unutterably glorious. Do not then be offended with a serious, earnest ministry. Forgive us our importunity. We must be importunate; or we shall hazard your best, your eternal interest; we shall forfeit our own immortal hopes; we shall perish with the blood and execrations of multitudes on our guilty heads. But, what did I say? Forgive us our importunity? Oh, heart-searching God, forgive us, that we have been so cold, so uninterested; that we have delivered thy message, and advocated thy cause with such faint and sluggish hearts. Take now, we beseech thee, the entire possession of our souls, and may our whole future lives be devoted to thy glory, and to the salvation of mankind. AMEN.